

Church Members' Perception of Returning Tithes in Paal 2 Seventh-Day Adventist Church Manado

Juwinner Dedy Kasingku
Faculty of Education, Universitas Klabat
juwinner.kasingku@unklab.ac.id

Abstract

This research utilizes a quantitative design in which measurements are used to see the level of variables and to see the relationships and effects of two or more variables for statistical studies. Convenience sampling is the data collection process. To locate the quantitative data, the questionnaire instrument is used. The interpretation of church members returning the tithe in this study used a Likert scale. There are three views of church members on the returning of the tithe as a result of this research. The first is the determination of members of the church to return the tenth because of the commandments of God is very high. The second is the belief of members of the church to return the tithe based on confidence in the organization of the church is high. The third is that by returning the tithe, church members believe they will receive God's blessings is very high.

Keywords: *blessing; church organization; God's commend; tithe*

Introduction

Tithing in this century is not a new phenomenon especially in the world of Christianity. The understanding of the returning tithe was taught over time. Tithing is accountable for reacting in life to the goodness of God and is also the order of God to be created by man. Everything in this world belongs to the Creator but what He asks to be returned to Him is one-tenth of the result of good work in the form of land, animals and others. Deuteronomy 14:22 "Be sure to set aside a tenth of all that your fields produce each year." Leviticus 27:30, "A tithe of everything from the land, whether grain from the soil or fruit from the trees, belongs to the LORD; it is holy to the LORD." Malachi 3: 6-10, bring the tithe offering to the house of God, then there will be blessings that He will give.

Tithing is a vital principle in church life. If a person has faith in God, he will return tithes because returning tithes is an honor to God. "There are very definite religious values in tithing. When we tell a man to give the tithe of his income to the Lord, we tell him something substantial and concrete. The actual working out of the tithe may involve a good complication, but the general

principle can be stated. The tithe is honoring God because, in tithing, God's portion is taken out first.”¹

At the Manado Conference, the Seventh-day Adventist Church of Paal 2 church was one of the largest tithe donors in 2018. In that time this church returned Rp. 1. 078. 551. 500. The idea of returning tithes is so important so researchers want to examine church members' perceptions about tithing in GMAHK Paal 2 church. The magnitude of the tithing return from the Paal 2 church so that researchers are interested in examining church members' perceptions about returning tithe.

Definition of Tithing

Tithe is tenth part of anything paid as a charitable donation or as a tax for the promotion of a religious institution in particular.² According to Leviticus 27:30, tithes belong to God. An obligation binds him who gives man the power to acquire wealth by grace. From all that we obtain, He demands a particular part.³ Tithing belongs to God. "Every tithe of the land, whether of the seed of the land, or of the fruit of the trees," "The tithe of the herd, or flock, ... shall be an offering unto the Lord "(Leviticus 27:30, 32). The promise Jacob made at Bethel illustrates the extent of that obligation. "... Of all that thou have given me," he said, "I will always give you a tenth of you" (Genesis 28:22).⁴ Human are just managers, not owners. God is the owner of all things, and He only asks for one-tenth of the results we have. That is what tithing means.

Early History of Tithing Collection

For His people, God always plans suitable. Awareness of God's goodness is essential. Genesis 14:20 says that "Abram gave him a tenth of everything". This is the first verse in the Bible that deals with the practice of tithing. According to the Christian history of tithing, "tithe, at present and for many centuries past the legal maintenance of the established church in Christian countries, was among the Jews an institution of divine origin, having been appointed by the Deity for the support of the tribe of Levi, which in place of the first-born of Jewish children was wholly devoted to his service.”⁵ Tithes have been practiced since ancient times to support the service of the tribe of Levi, and this is an order from God to be practiced.

Perceptions of Returning Tithe

It is inseparable from different perceptions when returning tithes that church members should knowingly return tithes belonging to God. There are three views that influence members of the church to return tithes, namely:

¹Holmes Rolston, *Stewardship In the New Testament Church: A Study in the Teachings of Saint Paul concerning Christian Stewardship* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2016), 21.

²*Merriam-Webster.com Dictionary*, s.v. "tithe," accessed February 23, 2021, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/tithe>.

³Ellen Gould White, *Education* (Mountain View, CA: Pacific Press Publishing Association, 1903), 138.

⁴Ellen Gould White, *Patriarch and Prophet* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1890) 187.

⁵Michael Nolan & Hartigan, *An Enquiry Into the History Of Tithe, Its Influence Upon The Agriculture, Population and Morals of Ireland: With A Plan For Modifying That System* (Charleston, SC: Nabu Press, 2011), 1.

God's command

In Malachi 3:10 says that bring all the tithes into the treasury, that there may be food in my house and test me, says the Lord of hosts, if I do not open to you the windows of heaven and pour you out a blessing. This verse asserts that it was God who asked the nation of Israel to bring tithes into the treasury. The tithe is God's commandment. If it is an absolute command from God, we must return it to God. God cannot be deceived.⁶

Many people believe that God in ancient revelation revealed His will to the race about tithing. The habit of tithing became a custom among the ancient nations due to revelation in ancient times. Although the Bible does not explicitly state the origin of tithing, the idea of tithing on God's incarnation to man since the beginning of this world's history.⁷ Ellen White says “the system of tithes and offerings was intended to impress the minds of men with a great truth—that God is the source of every blessing to his creatures, and that to him man’s gratitude is due for the good gifts of his providence.”⁸ Every blessing come from God as the sources of our life. We should return what God asks for.

From the property entrusted to man, God demands a particular portion - tithing. It leaves everyone free to say whether they will give more than this. God gives health, strength to human beings and His other created beings and that what He demands from human beings is to return tithes and give offerings.

Trust in church organization

The Seventh-day Adventist Church has been organized since 1863 and still exist until today. One of the foundations of church belief is to restore tithing as part of stewardship. Tithe system is exquisite in its simplicity. Justice is expressed by the demands that are balanced both for the rich and for the poor. The equivalence lies in God as the owner who gives us to use, so that is how we must return one-tenth of our income to Him.⁹

According to the Seventh-day Adventist Church Manual, we are part of God's church, and being part of His church is a unique opportunity and makes the soul happy.¹⁰ The same book further states that by recognizing the biblical plan and the congregation members' sacred privileges as children of God and members of His body, namely the Church, the whole community is encouraged to return tithe, one-tenth of their income or salary faithfully into the treasury of the Church.¹¹ “Tithe is the Lord’s and is to be brought as an act of worship to the conference treasury through the church in which the person’s membership is held. Where unusual circumstances exist, members should consult with conference officers.”¹² We will bring the tithes to the organization as an evidence of our trust in God. Church organization is an extension of God's hand.

⁶A. W Miller, *The Law of the Tithe and of the Free-Will Offering*, (Columbia, SC: Presbyterian Publishing House, 1873), 95

⁷Arthur V. Babbs, *The Law of the Tithe* (New York, Fleming H. Revell Company, 1912), 24.

⁸Ellen Gould White, *The Review and Herald*, Sept. 10, 1889

⁹*Seventh-day Adventist Believe* (Ministerial Association: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 313.

¹⁰*Seventh-day Church Manual* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 20.

¹¹*Ibid*, 136.

¹²*Seventh-day Church Manual* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 2015), 137.

God's Blessing

Tithing is part of the stewardship of the property. This system is what financially supports the priests who carry out priesthood duties at the temple of God. Furthermore, this method is used by the church to support evangelism in the world.¹³ Through returning the property of God by tithing and channeling it through evangelism, then God as the source of blessings will return His blessings to faithful people who return tithes.

The Bible provides confirmation that God's blessing will be given to those who faithfully return their tithe. Genesis 28: 20-22 states that God was with and looking after Jacob, providing food and clothing so that Jacob believed in God, and he tithed. Deuteronomy 14: 28,29 informs that God will bless all work done as long as giving a more specific tithe to help orphans, widows, and strangers. Malachi 3: 8, 9 speaks not only of blessings but also of curses. So, if you give the tithe, God will bless, but if you rob God by withholding the tithe, God will curse. "If you are faithful in stewardship, there are blessings you will receive."¹⁴ However, the blessings of God include the following three elements:

- a. Personal Blessing - "Every work we do for Christ will be rewarded by Him, for all the work we do in His name will work out our happiness."¹⁵
- b. Blessings to others - "Stewardship involves serving others and being willing to share whatever God has given him in abundance, thus bringing blessings to others as well."¹⁶
- c. Blessings to the Church - "The church will have sufficient expenses to carry out the ministry, to expand the kingdom of God around it, and then to expand it even further."¹⁷

Method

This study examines the level of congregation members' perceptions of fidelity in returning tithe to God through the church organization. In terms of methods and approaches, this study uses a survey method with a quantitative approach. Data analysis is carried out using descriptive statistics to determine the variables' level.¹⁸ This research was conducted at the Seventh Day Adventist Church of the Paal 2 Manado congregation as one of the communities with the largest tithe givers in the year when this research was conducted, from 31 July 2019 to 31 June 2020.

According to Suharsimi a research instrument is a tool selected and used by researchers in carrying out their activities to collect data so that these activities become systematic and made more accessible by them.¹⁹ In collecting data, this study uses a questionnaire as an instrument. The questionnaire consists of 23 questions which specifically consist of four questions asking about the perception component 1 (God's command), 13 questions asking about the perception component 2 (trust in church organization), and five questions asking about the perception component 3 (God's

¹³Seventh-day Adventist Believe (Ministerial Association: General Conference of Seventh-day Adventists, 2005), 311.

¹⁴Ibid, 312.

¹⁵Ibid, 313.

¹⁶Ibid, 314.

¹⁷Ibid.

¹⁸Suryoatmono, B. *Kursus Statistika Dasar* (2007) adapted from <http://home.unpar.ac.id/~suryoatm/Kursus%20Statistika%20Dasar.PDF>.

¹⁹Suharsimi, Arikunto. *Pengertian instrument menurut para ahli* (2015) adapted from <https://www.seputarpengetahuan.co.id/2015/11/pengertian-instrumen-penelitian-menurut-para-ahli>.

blessings). The questionnaire was created using Google Forms and distributed to respondents online, namely through WhatsApp.

The data in this study were obtained using a convenience sampling technique. A total of 175 people were taken as many as 57 samples who volunteered to fill out the sent online questionnaire. Moleong states that data analysis is the process of organizing and sorting data into patterns, categories and basic description units so that themes can be found and work hypotheses can be formulated as suggested by the data. The data analysis stage is an essential part of the research. In this stage, the researcher can conclude the information found in the field for research purposes.²⁰

This study uses descriptive statistical analysis techniques that analyze the average level of church members' perceptions of tithe return. The questionnaire instrument carried out produced quantitative data in the form of a Likert scale. The responses of parishioners regarding their perceptions of fidelity returning tithe are seen in numerical terms such as: 5 = very high, 4 = high, 3 = moderate, 2 = low, and 1 = very low. The Likert scale, according to Sugiyono (2012), is used to measure the attitudes, opinions and perceptions of a person or group of people about social phenomena.

To measure the level of perception of church members, the following scale is used:

- 1.00 - 1.49 Very low
- 1.50 - 2.49 Low
- 2.50 - 3.49 moderate
- 3.50 - 4.49 High
- 4.50 - 5.00 Very high

Results and Discussion

This section discusses and describes the findings and interpretations to answer the questions to formulate the problem.

Confidence returning tithe based on God's command

The research results on 55 respondents at Paal 2 Seventh-day Adventist Church, Manado, found that the average value was 4.80, based on the Likert-s Scale between 4.50 - 5.00. This data means that confidence in returning the tithe because God's command is very high.

Confidence returning tithe based on trust in church Organization

The study results were conducted on 55 respondents at Paal 2 Seventh-day Adventist Church, Manado, found that the average value was 4.38, based on the Likert-s Scale between 3.50 - 4.49. This data means that confidence in restoring tithe based on trust in church organization is high.

²⁰Lexy J. Moleong, *Metodologi Penelitian Kualitatif*, (Bandung: Remaja Rosdakarya, 2017), 280-281.

Returning tithe based on God's blessings

According to the research results of 55 respondents at Paal 2 Seventh-day Adventist Church, Manado, found that the average value was 4.43 on the basis of the Likert scale between 3.50 - 4.49. This information implies that the confidence in restoring the tithe based on the blessings to be granted by God is high.

Conclusion

There are three perceptions determine the Seventh-day Adventist members in returning tithe.

1. The first perception is that church members return tithe because they believed in God's commandments. God created the world, and God commanded to fear Him. To reflect on fearing God by respecting God by keeping God's commandments. The mean score of the first church members perception is 4.80. It means that congregational members' confidence in God's commandments so that church members return their tithe is very high.
2. The second perception is that church members return the tithe because of congregational convictions based on their trust. Congregation members believe that the church or organization is God's representative in this world. That is why the mean value of the second church members perception is 4.43. It means that members' confidence in returning tithe based on trust in the organization is high.
3. The third perception is that church members return the tithe because of the confidence that church members will receive blessings. When returning the tithe, the church members believe that God will give the blessing, but otherwise, they will receive the curse if they do not return the tithe. The mean score of the third church members perception is 4.80. It means is very high.

Overall, we can conclude that the Paal 2 church members have a favorable perception of tithing through church organizations. In other words, church members have succeeded in developing perceptual patterns about tithe that are in line with biblical principles and the Spirit of Prophecy's writings. To pastors and church members, it is suggested that they keep and maintain this pattern of perceptions so that the loyalty of church members in returning the tithe is sustainable or even higher in the future.